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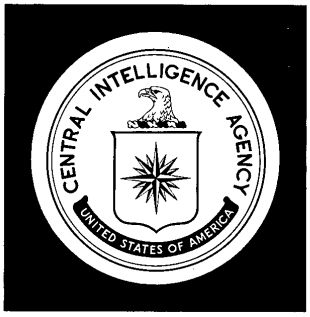

The President's Daily Brief

18 April 1972

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~~Top Secret~~

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

18 April 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Page 1 we discuss this order and other Soviet reactions to events in Vietnam. On *Page 3* we comment on Xuan Thuy's statement in Paris yesterday linking Hanoi's negotiating stance with the US bombing in North Vietnam. The latest military developments in South Vietnam appear on *Page 4*.

The Chinese are adding a port to their facilities in the Paracels, the southernmost territory under Peking's control. *(Page 5)* 25X1

[redacted]

The Pakistani National Assembly yesterday approved an interim constitution. *(Page 6)*

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USSR-VIETNAM

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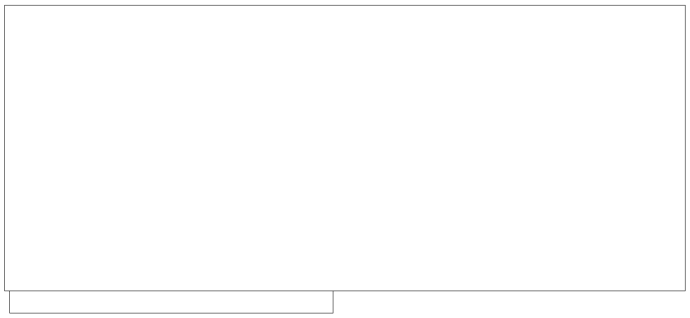

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The Soviets yesterday published the full text of their protest note to the US and stated that Soviet ships in Haiphong had been damaged while unloading "civilian cargo." They took note of the casualties among Vietnamese dock workers but said nothing about the injury of a Soviet seaman

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According to TASS, the Soviet party official responsible for Moscow's relations with ruling Communist parties met with the North Vietnamese chargé in Moscow yesterday in an "atmosphere of cordiality, unity, and fraternal friendship."

> *The presence of the chargé at the talk suggests that North Vietnamese Ambassador Dong may have returned to Hanoi in the last few days. He was last noted in Moscow on 13 April. Most of Hanoi's senior envoys have been in Hanoi since the beginning of this month.*

Developments in Indochina had their first direct impact on bilateral US-Soviet relations yesterday when the Soviets canceled the first meeting of the US-Soviet maritime talks in Washington. They specifically cited the "events of yesterday," meaning the

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US bombing raids on 15-16 April. Soviet delegation chief Averin, expressing regret, told US representatives that neither the scheduled morning meeting of the delegation heads nor the succeeding formal session would take place. He then largely diluted the effect of his message, however, by inviting US officials to meet with him at noon and by proceeding with the talks after lunch.

Averin's apparent embarrassment at having the talks even slightly disrupted, his reluctance to mention Vietnam by name, and the limited nature of the protest itself suggest that the Soviets are anxious to make their display of displeasure as pro forma as possible, at least for the present, in ongoing bilateral relations.

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NORTH VIETNAM

Chief negotiator Xuan Thuy told the press yesterday that if the Paris negotiations were resumed "in the usual manner" and if the US stopped bombing North Vietnam, politburo member Le Duc Tho would return to Paris. Thuy also intimated that further secret talks might be possible if these two conditions were met.

Thuy's announcement would seem to signal a more flexible approach to negotiating tactics than has been implicit in Hanoi's recent public line. His statement, however, reveals nothing of the substance of current Communist negotiating demands. He said only that Hanoi continues to support the Viet Cong seven points and the two-point "elaboration" on them last February. But Thuy's ostensible interest in resuming the talks suggests that the Communists hope to create the impression that they have something new in mind.

This move clearly is in part a response to the bombing attacks over the weekend. At yesterday's press conference, Thuy quoted extensively from an emotional North Vietnamese government-party statement that struck a defensive tone in asserting that the bombing will have no long-range effect. The statement also seemed to betray Hanoi's discomfort over the current diplomatic situation, claiming that the US is "using crafty political and diplomatic ploys to cover up its wicked design of aggression." It also repeated the appeal for additional public support which Hanoi directed at the Soviet Union and China on 11 April.

Nothing, however, in either Thuy's remarks or the joint statement indicates that Hanoi is bending under the current strains. The new line may well be designed not only to put maximum public pressure on the US to halt the bombing but to provide ammunition to domestic opponents of Washington's entire Vietnam policy.

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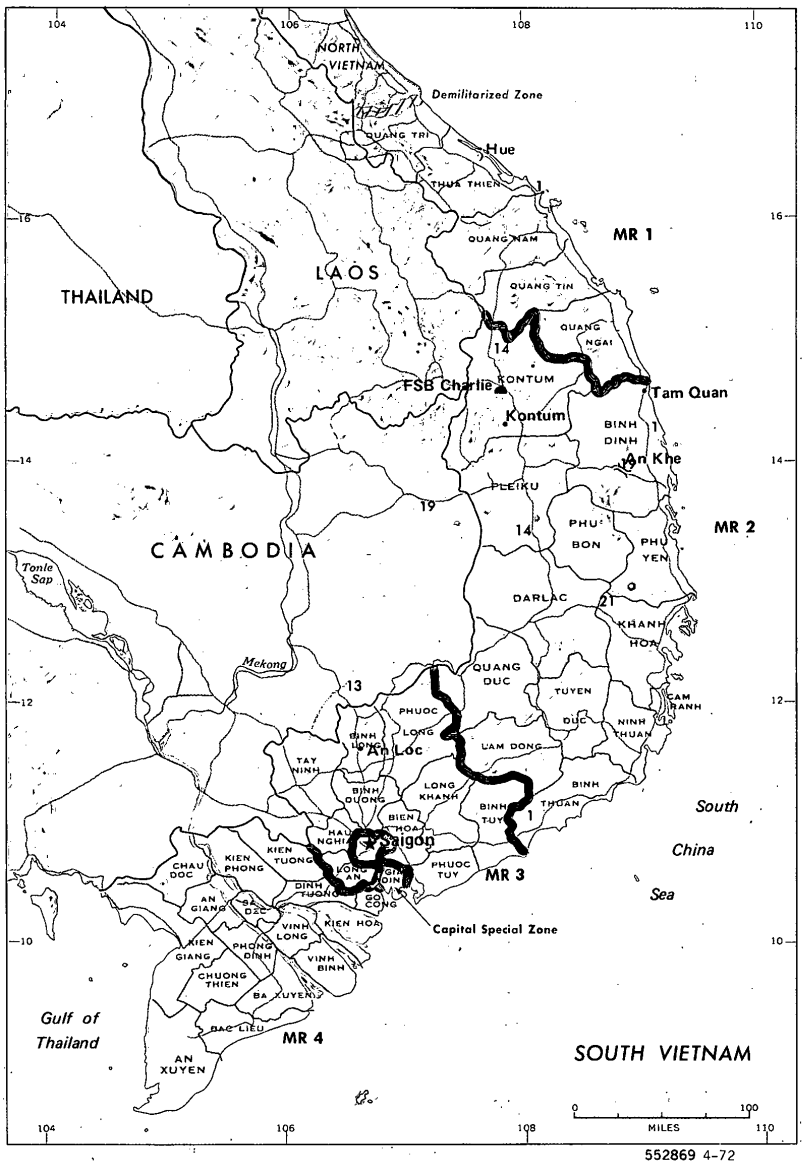

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SOUTH VIETNAM

The relative lull in major Communist attacks continues throughout most of the country. Today the Communists increased their shelling of An Loc but they have mounted no new armored or infantry assaults against the town. The enemy buildup nearby and along Route 13 to the south now includes all three regiments of the 7th Division. With two regiments from both the 5th and 9th Divisions as well as one independent regiment there, the Communists now have a total of eight regiments deployed against about five South Vietnamese regiments.

In MR-2, Communist forces are showing new vigor, particularly in interdicting lines of communication. For over a week they have blocked Route 19 connecting the highlands to the coast. Local forces have knocked out bridges, mined roads, and ambushed convoys along Route 1 from Binh Dinh south through Phu Yen to Khanh Hoa Province. Traffic on Route 14 in the central highlands and on Route 21 in southern MR-2 is also being harassed, but so far to a lesser degree.

Enemy forces in MR-2 have scored three noteworthy successes in the past week. Elements of the Communist 320th Division drove government defenders out of Fire Base Charlie north of Kontum city late last week, as reported yesterday in The President's Daily Brief, and local Viet Cong units overran Tam Quan District headquarters in Binh Dinh Province over the weekend. In an engagement on Saturday not previously reported, elements of the Communist 3rd Division forced two battalions of South Vietnamese troops to break and run, although they regrouped a few hours later.

Some government forces are doing well, however. While the South Vietnamese continue to hold An Loc against a large enemy force, yesterday other units attacked the Communists in two engagements ten miles southwest of Hue. They report that they killed 370 of the enemy.

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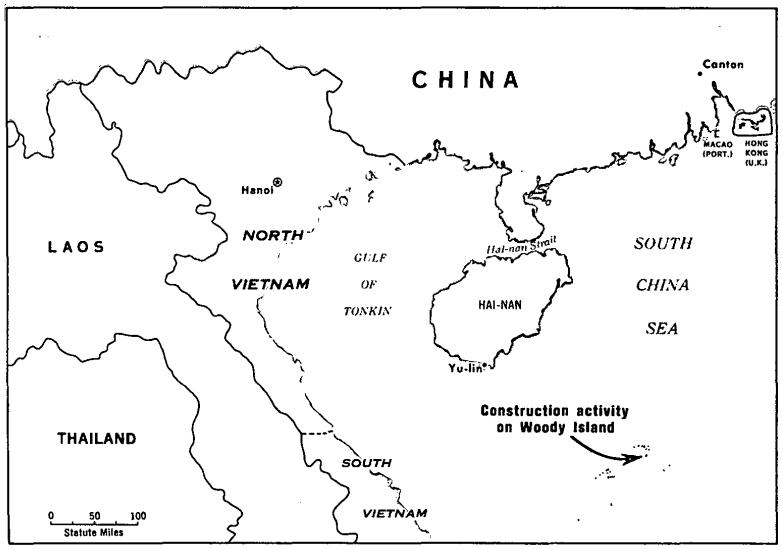
Chinese Continue Construction in Paracel Islands



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CHINA

Recent satellite photography shows that the Chinese are adding a port to their facilities at Woody Island in the Paracels. They have completed about one third of a 1,500-foot quay, together with the necessary dredging to bring oceangoing ships alongside. Since last October they have also added more antiaircraft sites, a radar facility, and 12 buildings to the 130 structures previously there.

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NOTES

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Pakistan: The National Assembly approved an interim constitution yesterday, President Bhutto's prerequisite for lifting martial law this coming Friday. The constitution leans toward a strong central presidency and contains other provisions that will have the effect of maintaining Bhutto in power. The autonomy-minded regional opposition parties abstained, fearing that a vote against the constitution would put them on record as obstructing the lifting of martial law. The intense rivalry between Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and the opposition could complicate the writing of the permanent constitution between now and August 1973.

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